(c) Food Corporation of India has not reported any such case.

(d) Food Corporation of India has reported that M/s Piyare Lal and Sons of Delhi has lifted 1,942.5 MTs of wheat and 3600 MTs of rice for export.

(e) Does not arise in view of the reply to part (c) above.

Sluggishness in sugarcane prices

2265. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the rising unsold stocks of sugar and also rising sugarcane arrears promised by the respective State Governments have resulted in lower sugar prices;

(b) if so, whether it is feared that around 30 per cent less sugarcane would be sown by farmers because of consistent sluggish prices;

(c) whether this has prompted the farmers to shift to other paying crops; and

(d) if so, what are the concrete remedial measures Government propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI U.V. KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) to (d) Due to higher level of production during the last four sugar seasons, there has been an accumulation of sugar stocks with the sugar factories. This has resulted in financial constraints to the sugar factories and the consequent increase in cane price dues of the farmers. Further, many mills have obtained the orders from the Courts for sale of sugar over and above their normal free sale quotas, due to which the prices of sugar have declined in the open market.

So far, no report has been received from any quarter regarding reduction in sugarcane area and shifting of sugarcane by the farmers to some other cash crops.

However, the Government has decided to create a buffer stock of 20 lakh tonnes of sugar for a period of one year. This will enable the sugar mills to get a subsidy amount of Rs. 412 crore from the Sugar Development Fund. In addition, an amount of Rs. 374 crores would be available from the banks to the mills on account of buffer stock. Thus, a total amount of Rs. 786 crores would be provided to the mills enabling them to clear the payment of cane price dues to the sugarcane growers. This will also help the sugar industry to mitigate the financial hardship.

Minimum support prices for rice and wheat

2266. SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the minimum support prices fixed for rice and wheat;

(b) the quantum of rice and wheat procured by the FCI and its agencies during the years 1998-99, 1999-2000, 2000-2001, 2001-2002 and the period from April, 2002; and

(c) whether procurement of rice and wheat at MSP would continue without any change?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI U.V. KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) The MSP of wheat for the current Rabi Marketing Seasons 2002-2003 was fixed at Rs. 620/- per quintal. The MSP for paddy during the Kharif Marketing Seasons (KMS) 2002-03 has been fixed at Rs. 530 per quintal for Common variety and Rs. 560 per quintal for Grade 'A' variety. In respect of levy rice delivered to the Central Pool, Statement-I showing the State-wise levy rice prices for current Kharif Marketing Season 2002-03 is enclosed. (*See* below)

(b) A Statement-II showing the total quantity of rice and wheat procured by the FCI from the year 1998-99 to 2001-02 and during 2002-03 (up to 10.12.02) is enclosed. (*See* below)

(c) Yes, Sir. The present procurement regime under price support operations at MSP would continue during the current marketing season.